

1 & 2 PETER

AN 8-WEEK CORE
GROUP STUDY

1 PETER: INTRODUCTION

AUTHOR

1 and 2 Peter are found towards the end of the New Testament. Their author is Peter, one of the most written-about disciples of Jesus. The man who writes these two letters appears radically different from the brash disciple written about in the four Gospels. Written quite a while after Jesus' ascension into heaven, Peter is now writing with great wisdom and a deep love for Jesus coming from decades of faithful service to Him.

AUDIENCE

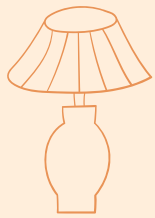
Peter addresses both these letters to those he calls "the elect exiles of the dispersion". These Christians feel as though they have been exiled, as their faith in Jesus and the action it requires is discordant with the culture around them. These Christians are those living in Asia Minor (present-day Turkey) and they are constantly seen as outcasts, often being falsely accused of crimes or ridiculed as a result of their faith.

HISTORICAL REFERENCES

Although it is uncertain if the Christian converts receiving this letter were Jewish or Gentile (referring to anyone who is not a Jew), it is important to note how Peter uses Jewish language to make some of his points. Peter talks about Christianity using the Old Testament Jewish traditions and practices because an understanding of God's Old Covenant--or agreement--with Israel brings a better grasp of why Jesus' life, death, and resurrection were significant. But how exactly has Jesus' time on earth impacted readers of 1 Peter--both 2000 years ago and today?

RELEVANCE

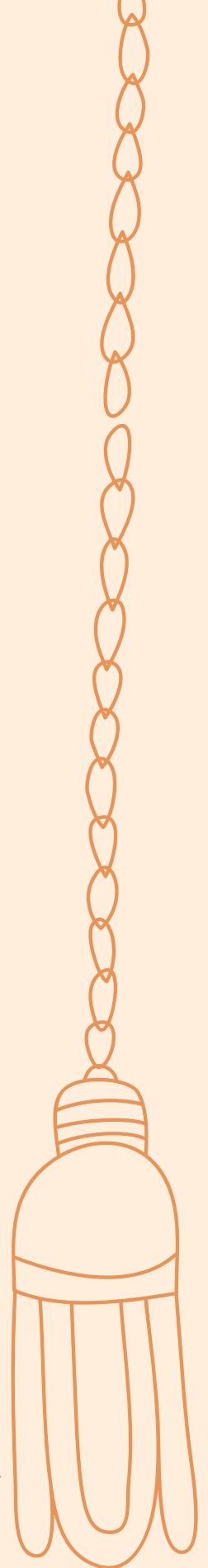
We (past and present readers) live in the in-between of Jesus' work. Jesus has already paid for humanity's sin by living a perfect life and dying an unjust death. However, we have not yet witnessed our final vindication. Sin still runs rampant in the world, despite God's open invitation to forgiveness for those sins. But someday, all injustice will be addressed and all brokenness will dissipate. Peter speaks of this coming day, both at the start of 1 Peter and at the end of 2 Peter. The impact of sin will be dealt with, but Peter knows he is writing to people who still feel its effect deeply. Peter recognizes their pain and throughout the letter, he works to sympathize with them and point them to the reality of the life of a Jesus follower--both its inevitable pain and the great hope they carry, as well.



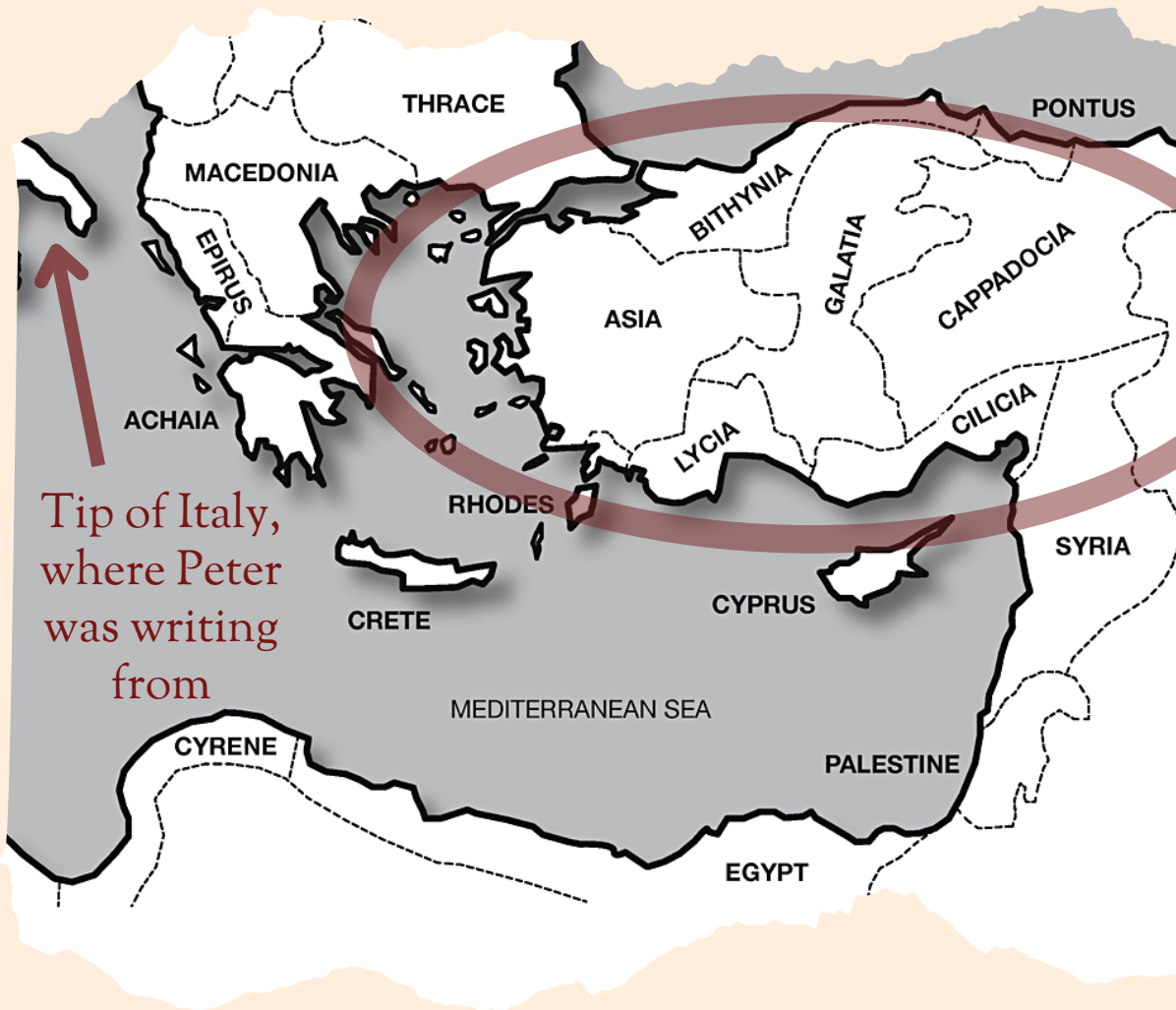
STUDY LAYOUT

Over the first five weeks of this study, you will work through the 5 chapters of 1 Peter and the last three weeks will cover the 3 chapters of 2 Peter. Each week will include an **overview** of the section, a **copy of the text** with **context notes** in the margins, as well as questions to use during discussion time. These **questions** will guide your group through observation, interpretation, and application of the text. Finally, each week will include a **practical challenge** section, called “Living Rooted” as a way to help your group carry the Word into the rest of the week.

Week 1:	1 Peter 1:1-9	Exiles with an Inheritance
Week 2:	1 Peter 1:14-25	Set Apart
Week 3:	1 Peter 2:13-25	Authority and Suffering
Week 4:	1 Peter 4:1-11	Living Out Victory
Week 5:	1 Peter 5:1-11	Sheep-Like Humility
Week 6:	2 Peter 1:1-20	God’s Invitation
Week 7:	2 Peter 2:1-22	Leaders’ Corruption
Week 8:	2 Peter 3:1-18	Leaders’ Distorted Theology



MAP OF ASIA MINOR



Tip of Italy,
where Peter
was writing
from

Modern-Day
Turkey,
where
Peter's
letters were
sent and
read



MAP OF 1 PETER



1:1-9
EXILES IN A
NEW FAMILY

1. Holy People of God
2. The New Covenant People
3. The New Temple
4. A Kingdom of Priests

1:13-2:10
A
NEW FAMILY
IDENTITY

2:11-4:11
SUFFERING
AS A
WITNESS

1. Persecution
2. Submission
3. Future vindication

4:12-5:9
SUFFERING
AND FUTURE
HOPE

1. Rejoicing in Persecution
2. Faith in Persecution

5:10-14
CLOSING



ONE

Exiles with an Inheritance

1 PETER 1:1-9

CONTEXT

This first section of 1 Peter uses two analogies to help the recent converts he's writing to understand their new life as believers.

At the start of the letter, Peter refers to these Christians as “exiles”, as mentioned in this study's introduction. These believers' lifestyles and worldview no longer align with the culture around them, leading them to no longer feel “at home” in the culture they have always known.

Think back to the first time you visited your family, hometown, or high school friends after leaving for a time, or maybe after starting college. Perhaps you experienced an odd disconnect from the places or even people that had always felt like “home” to you. Your own life experiences while elsewhere or at Yale have not changed the things or people you love, but you yourself were starting to see things through a slightly different lens, whether that be one of greater maturity, cynicism, joy, or something else you picked up while away.

Peter's readers were experiencing this shift; they now viewed the world around them through the eyes of a Christ follower, and the changes their new life required grated against the culture at the time.

The other analogy Peter uses, however, provides great hope in the midst of this difficult position as a “cultural exile”. He points out that these new Christians are now a part of the family of God, obligated to receive an inheritance. Even better, this inheritance of eternal life with Christ is not like earthly inheritances; it will not fade or be taken away.

The start to 1 Peter tells the story of those in an uncertain position as cultural exiles and the assurance of better things to come.

1 Peter 1:1-9

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood:

May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!

According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, 9 obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

These are regions of Asia Minor (present-day Turkey)

This term was especially significant for any Jews reading this letter, as they had been displaced from their homeland. The inheritance of land was the primary way in that day to increase one's wealth, social status, and security, and these Jews had been ripped away from their earthly inheritance. But as adopted sons and daughters of God's family, their inheritance is not only greater than what they left behind, but it is also unable to be taken or destroyed.

Observation & Interpretation



- After reading this passage, what words, phrases, or themes stick out to you?
- Verses 4 & 7 state that both a believer's inheritance and genuine faith do not perish. What are other things that are truly "imperishable"?
- How does the definition of "inheritance", explained above, give believers the strength to press on?
- Re-read verse 8's definition of faith. How does the concept of faith stand in contrast to modern cultural values?
- How does faith lead to "inexpressible joy" (verse 8)?

Application

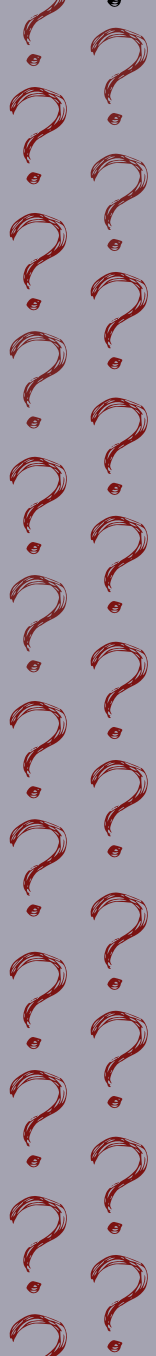


- What other things do you find yourself putting your faith in?
- Have you found any practices that grow your faith in Jesus? Which one of these practices can you commit to taking part in within the next week?

Living Rooted

Think about Peter's role as "one who encourages" to those enduring great suffering in the midst of cultural exile. As the semester is getting started, how can you practically come alongside those who are struggling here at Yale? How might you be one who encourages others the semester ahead.

Note: In Peter's day, "parakaleo" was the Greek word for "encourage" or "implore". This word means "to call" (kaleo) "from close beside" (para). Meaningful encouragement requires close proximity. Although a quick text to an acquaintance can be uplifting, the most weighty encouragement comes from those who know us well enough to uplift in a relevant manner.



TWO

Set Apart

1 PETER 1:14-25

CONTEXT

This week starts the main body of Peter's first letter to the Christians in Asia Minor. The focus of last week's passage was faithfulness in the midst of hardship. Now, Peter moves to encourage these believers to live holy lives and to love one another.

Peter uses references to the Israelites in the Old Testament in order to weave a beautiful story of God's faithfulness and timelessness of these mandates to live holy lives and love one another.

The first reference that Peter makes is to the Old Testament book of Leviticus where God is giving a set of instructions for the Israelites to live by when they start living in the land God has chosen for them. God implores His people to "be holy, for I am holy". Have you ever bought or received something and then gone on to save it for a special occasion? Maybe you got new shoes for a holiday or your birthday, but refused to wear them until the first day back at school or a specific social gathering; you may have been setting this item apart for a specific purpose.

God had made this principle of "setting something apart" central to his instructions for the Israelites. This command comes up four different times in Leviticus and Peter brings it up here to show that God still desires His people (anyone who follows him) to be holy, or "set apart". Just as ancient Israel observed customs that set them apart from the ancient Mesopotamian cultures of their day, Peter instructs the Jesus followers of his day that they, too, must be set apart from the rituals and practices taking place around them.

The second reference that Peter makes in this section is to Isaiah 40. Isaiah was a prophet in the Old Testament who often spoke about Jesus coming to earth someday, as well as the End Times. These verses introduce the promises God makes to redeem his people, both historical Israel, as well as all humankind. Peter appeals to this Scripture to teach them that despite their suffering, they are nevertheless participating in the eternal plan of God. In this plan, they have been welcomed into the family of God, gaining "brothers" and "sisters" in fellow believers. Jesus' coming to earth and His eventual return not only restore our relationship with Him, but should lead to restored relationship with others, as well.

1 Peter 1:14-25

14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, 15 but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” 17 And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, 18 knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

20 He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you 21 who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

22 Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart,

23 since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; 24 for

“All flesh is like grass
and all its glory like the flower of grass.

The grass withers,
and the flower falls,

25 but the word of the Lord remains forever.”

And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

Can be found in
Leviticus 11:44,
19:2, 20:7-8, and
20:26

A reference to
the required
standard of the
Passover
animal sacrifice.
Jesus not only
met this
requirement
(spotless) but
his blood was
also shed on
the cross

Jesus was
chosen as the
perfect sacrifice
before the
world came
into being. God
always had a
plan to restore
mankind!

Can be found in
Isaiah 40:6-8

Observation & Interpretation



- After reading this passage, what words, phrases, or themes stick out to you?
- What does Peter mean by “the former ignorance” (verse 14)?
- How does Peter highlight the enduring nature of God’s Word in verses 22-25

- What does Peter mean by “be holy in all your conduct”? How might that challenge modern Christians to live differently from the surrounding culture?
- What is the difference between loving someone with a pure heart and selfish or compromised heart (verse 22)?

Application



- How does being “holy in your conduct” (verse 14) differ from legalism (i.e. excessive adherence and enforcement of moral law)? Perhaps think about the motivations for both ways of living.
- Think about healthy sibling relationships you have observed. What does it look like to be a “brother” or “sister” to your peers?

Living Rooted



Think of your Core Group as a family; if we are to be brothers and sisters to one another, what is one family activity you can commit to engaging in this week? Can you eat dinner all together? Run errands together? Meet up in someone’s college for a game night? Commit to something together with your “brothers” or “sisters”.

THREE

Authority & Suffering

1 PETER 2:13-25

CONTEXT

The last two weeks, have looked at ways in which the Christians of Asia Minor were instructed to be “set apart” from the culture surrounding them and how today, Christians today must do the same. This week’s passage touches on how yielding to authority is to be carried out by followers of Jesus, yet another area where Jesus’ instructions clash with the norms of our day.

What are some “silly” rules that you have encountered in school or the workplace that you didn’t quite understand or agree with? These rules may make us feel ridiculous, confused, or even belittled. Admit it, no one seems to really know why we had to use MLA format on our English papers...

In this passage, Peter talks about how Christians are to yield to the authority structures of their world. It’s tempting sometimes to use loyalty to Jesus as a license to go against various governing bodies, especially when those in authority have no intention of making decisions that honor God. But Peter instructs his readers to not only yield to their authority, but to “do good” so that they represent Christianity well and silence those who seek to discredit followers of Jesus. It is important to note that the instruction to honor authority must come alongside the higher calling to obey God.

The second part of this week’s passage requires a serious look at the context, as Peter addresses the issues of yielding to authority, not just as a citizen of a nation, but as a member of a Roman household. Slaves (oiketai, meaning “unfree house servants”) would have made up about a quarter of the population and a great deal of the church, as well. The households of the time operated in such a way that household servants were expected to adopt the religion of their master. If a servant became a Christian, they would almost definitely face varying degrees of suffering for their faith, in addition to the inherently dehumanizing nature of slavery. Peter states that enduring sorrow is commendable, as Jesus, too, endured great sorrow at the hands of unjust authorities operating in a broken system.

An additional note here: many unjust systems and actions are contained in the Bible, but their mention does not equate endorsement. Peter’s mentioning of slaves here is not condoning slavery. Instead, we can understand Peter addressing the slaves in the church as acknowledging them as integral parts of the family of God having just as many rights in God’s family as other Christians.

1 Peter 2:13-25

13 Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, 14 or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. 15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. 16 Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. 17 Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

18 Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. 19 For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. 20 For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. 21 For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. 22 He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. 23 When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. 24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. 25 For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

The "brotherhood" here would refer to fellow Christ followers who have become sons and daughters of God.

This example provides a picture of the same kind of injustice that Jesus endured when he experienced inexplicable suffering on the cross, despite being completely free from sin or wrongdoing.

The tree here refers to the cross that Jesus died on, a death reserved for the worst offenders of the Law.

Observation & Interpretation

- After reading this passage, what words, phrases, or themes stick out to you?
- Who is “he who judges justly” in verse 21?
- How does healing come from Jesus’ wounds (verse. 24)?
- Take a look at verse 16 again. How might one use Christian freedom as a cover-up for evil? How might they use it to be a “servant of God”?
- In verse 21, Peter mentions Jesus’ suffering. In what ways did Jesus suffer?

Application

- In verses 21-25, Peter describes Christ as a model for how believers should respond to suffering. What specific aspects of Christ’s example does Peter highlight and what do these reveal about suffering?
- Take a look at verse 25 again. How does the picture of Jesus as a shepherd contrast against the other pictures of authority in this passage?

Living Rooted

One practice that increases our ability to naturally honor authority figures is to pray for them. Spend time this week in prayer for those in authority over you. Pray for their health, their decision making, their family, etc. You can use the list below for ideas of who to pray for.

- Your parent, aunt, uncle, grandparent, etc.
- A Yale faculty member you often interact with
- A government official (senator, mayor, president)
- Your boss
- Your pastor

FOUR

Living out Victory

1 PETER 4:1-22

CONTEXT

Have you ever “gotten to know” someone purely through second-hand accounts and stories of people who know them? Maybe you never met them or didn’t for a long time, but their “reputation preceded them”.

In week 1 of this study covered how Peter uses two analogies to describe a Christian’s place in the world. Firstly, they are cultural exiles, people with a different worldview and different practices than those around them. They are also members of a family, adopted sons and daughters of God. These two ideas are threaded throughout the passage this week, as well.

Verses 1-6 examine how Christians are to adopt the same resolve that Jesus had while on earth so that they may honor God and not pursue their own human desires. He points out that because the culture around them emphasized personal truth over The Truth, a Christian’s denial to engage in things that feel or seem “good” will confuse and upset those who do not follow God. But Christians are not to abandon the culture they are surrounded by, but rather to engage with it AS Christ followers. The sins of their past life are to be discarded, not the people from that life. Jesus was the perfect example of living as a cultural exile: a sinless man whose allegiance was to God and God alone, but who lived among the sinful. He never engaged in the sins of the culture around him and yet showed perfect love to those who did.

The second part of this week’s passage (verses 7-11) ties to the second major analogy of 1 Peter: that of a family. This family of God’s children is to earnestly love. Peter implies that this earnestness will “cover all sins” or break the downward spiral of hard feelings and bitterness that so often occurs in relationships. Earnestly (literally “steadfastly pursuing” in the Greek) loving our brothers and sisters brings glory to God, accomplishing the greatest goal of a Christian: to point others to Him.

1 Peter 4:1-11

1 Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, 2 so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God. 3 For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. 4 With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; 5 but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. 6 For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.

7 The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. 8 Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. 10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: 11 whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

As the Jews were set apart for God from the rest of the world (being the Gentiles), Christians are the ones who are now set apart from the rest of the world (here euphemistically referred to here as "Gentiles")

"The dead" here refers to those who are now dead who heard the Gospel while they were alive.

The nearness of the end (Jesus returning to earth) highlights the need to obey the directive to "love one another earnestly" that follows; as we have no time to waste.

Observation & Interpretation



- After reading this passage, what words, phrases, or themes stick out to you?
- Look back at verses 1-2 where Peter mentions that those who have suffered in the flesh have ceased from sin. Now go read Romans 6:11-12, an excerpt of a letter written by another early church figure, Paul. What does the text mean by “cease to sin” (1 Peter) or “dead to sin” (Romans)?
- What is the difference between a life lived “for human passions” and one lived “for the will of God” (verse 2)?
- Take a look at verses 7-9 again. What attitudes and behaviors should characterize the believers’ approach to the end time? Why does obeying these directives matter to those who follow Jesus?
- What do verses 10-11 reveal about the nature and purpose of spiritual gifts in Christian community?

Application

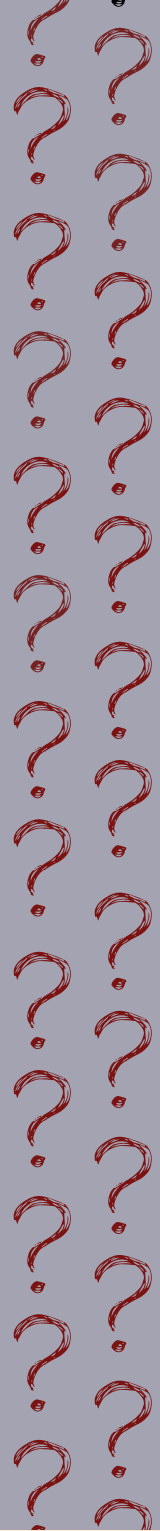


- What are some gifts that you have been given? You can use the list in Romans 12:6-8 to think about how God has gifted you to serve others.
- Think about some human, “fleshly” desires that you have. In what ways are you constantly tempted to “do what you want to do” instead of living for the will of God? Consider sharing with your Core Group so that they may pray for you in this way.

Living Rooted

Note that this section of 1 Peter not only admonishes us to forsake fleshly desires, but to “love one another earnestly” and to “serve one another”. In the battle against sin, we are not to fight alone! Peter connects this internal battle with the external comfort of Christian community.

Take some time at the end of Core Group to pray for each member of the group one at a time and out loud. You can pray for specific temptations they may have shared in the second application question or simply pray that God would give them strength and comfort in whatever they’re facing.



FIVE

Sheep-Like Humility

1 PETER 5:1-11

CONTEXT

1 Peter utilizes the ideas of exile and family to demonstrate how Christ followers relate to the world around them. This week's excerpt brings in another illustration: that of a shepherd. Peter uses the shepherd analogy to not only talk about how leaders are to interact with those they lead, but also to examine Jesus' relationship with us.

Who is an excellent leader in your life? What makes them stick out to you? In the first few verses of this week's section, Peter encourages elders to "shepherd the flock". The elders of the day would have been responsible for pastoring people, managing finances, and leading by example in their Christian walk. To best understand what leaders are asked to do, we must understand a shepherd's role in the first century. A shepherd would have been responsible for the wellbeing of the sheep, night and day. Sheep are not very intelligent animals and so, shepherding a flock meant feeding, watering, and protecting them from predators. David, an Old Testament King, was known to have faced lions and bears during his time as a shepherd. Although the sheep are not smart, they are incredibly valuable to their owner. The shepherd is being entrusted to protect and care for that which is not their own, just as Christian leaders are entrusted to protect and care for that which God values most: His creation. The expectations outlined in verses 2-3 apply just as much to *today's* Christian leaders.

Then, verse 4 moves on to expound on another shepherding relationship: God's great care for us. This week will look at the section from 1 Peter, then move to Psalm 23 which presents a clear picture of how God lovingly and perfectly shepherds us.

The final main section of instruction in 1 Peter focuses on the need for humility. As exiles of the culture surrounding them and as members of the family of God, possessing humility would have been paramount. Humility is active, selfless service of others coming from a right view of ourselves in relation to God. Cultural exiles would have needed humility to faithfully serve and love those who despise them. In addition, members of the family of God must "clothe themselves" in humility in order to truly "live at peace" (Romans 12) with their brothers and sisters in Christ. Although living humble lives as God's sheep proves troubling and tiresome, we can be comforted by Peter's final words in this section: "Christ will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you!"

1 Peter 5:1-11

1 So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: 2 shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; 3 not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. 5 Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." 6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, 7 casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. 8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. 10 And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. 11 To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Parallels John 10:10 where Jesus states that "the thief comes to kill, steal, and destroy". However, Jesus follows this serious warning up by saying "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full!"

This would have been striking to readers, as Rome was the ultimate power of the time, having established pax Romana (or "Roman peace) which unified the Roman empire and brought about great political peace. Peter's statement here reminds us of the reality that only Jesus' Kingdom will bring true, lasting peace.

Observation & Interpretation

- Re-read verse 4 then go and read Psalm 23 together. Then spend some time on the following questions:
 - After reading this passage, what words, phrases, or themes stick out to you?
 - We can easily pick out all the things God does FOR his sheep in this passage, but what does the narrator do and feel?
- How is verse 7 from 1 Peter 5 supported by this chapter in Psalms?
- How does the first part of verse 5 relate to the ideas of submission and yielding that were discussed in week 3?
- Re-read verses 6-7. How are humility and casting anxiety on God related here?
- The note on verse 11 explains how, at the writing of this letter, the Empire of Rome appeared to have ultimate authority and dominion in the first century. Of course, that was not a permanent reality. What are other things that appear to have a great deal of dominion in our culture today? How do verses 10-11 address the future of these artificial rulers of culture?

Application

- How can we actively demonstrate humility in our own roles as leaders and friends? What practical steps can we take to prioritize others with a heart of “rest” even when no one praises you?
- Peter speaks in every chapter of this book about suffering. He seems to present suffering as not just something that *can* happen, but as something that *will* happen in the lives of Christians. Looking at the last 5 weeks of this study, as well as your own life, what do you understand to be the purpose of suffering? Have you ever grown in your relationship with God through suffering?

Living Rooted

Verses 6 and 7 talk about casting our anxieties of God with a heart of humility. Are there strategies or practices that can help you (both as an individual and as a Core Group) develop a deeper trust in the Lord? Take some time in Core Group or on your own this week to journal or just think about how you can cultivate a habit of surrendering your anxieties to God in the everyday rhythms of your life at Yale.

2 PETER: INTRODUCTION

AUDIENCE

2 Peter is named as such simply because it is the second of two letters from Peter which are included in the Biblical canon. Peter is writing to the same group of churches as he did in his first letter--those in Asia Minor. However, the issues the Peter addresses vary quite a bit from his first letter.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The reason for this shift is a historical change in the kinds of temptations and trials that the church was facing. It seems that the cultural pressure on Christians has lessened to some degree, but a new threat has entered the church: false teachers. Peter knows that he is going to die soon. Emperor Nero's rule in the late 1st Century caused great persecution of Christians in Rome, where Peter was at the time of writing. As his death looms near, he sends this urgent message to the churches of Asia Minor to exercise great discernment as they seek to follow Jesus.

CONTENT

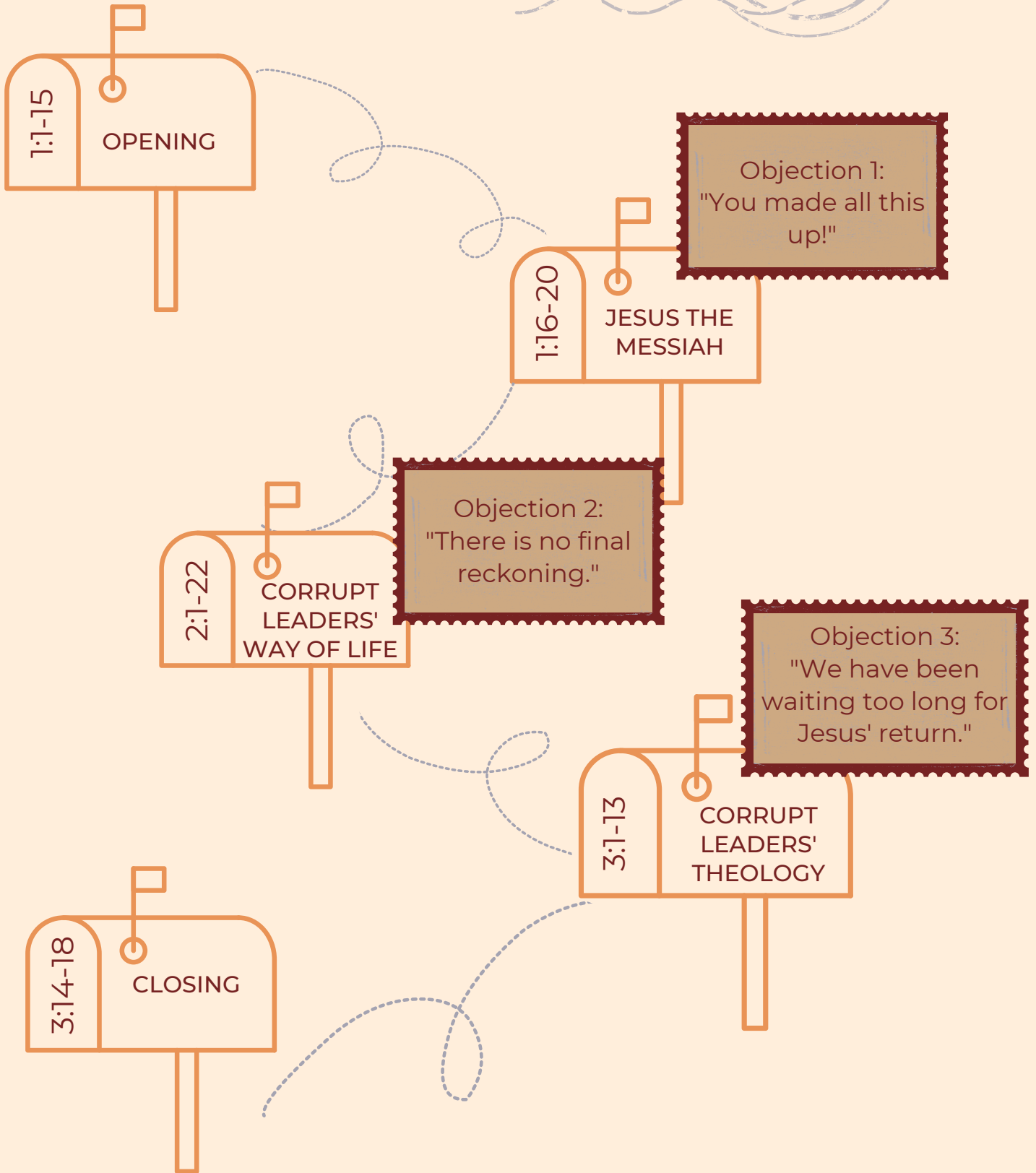
This letter systematically addresses three different accusations made by false teachers in the church against himself and other 1st century church leaders. Peter desires to restore confidence and order in these churches by addressing the doubts and questions that have come up as a result of the rampant false teachings. A study of each of these three objections and Peter's addressing of them will make up the last three weeks of this study.

2 Peter is...pretty intense. Peter uses references to the Old Testament to both condemn the false teachers and to present a hope-filled picture of the future. While 1 Peter spends a lot of time talking about suffering as a cultural exile, 2 Peter is an urgent request to deal with deceptions occurring within the Church. BOTH letters of Peter, however, conclude with a hope-filled reminder that Jesus, the True King, will someday come to make all things right.

STUDY NOTE

Because each chapter is a clear, systematic argument against a specific false teaching, each week will cover a whole chapter so as not to lose out on the big picture of the book of 2 Peter. The highlighted portions in each of the introductions are meant to provide you with a simple outline for each chapter to make the slightly longer reading a little easier to navigate.

MAP OF 2 PETER



SIX

God's Invitation

2 PETER 1:1-20

CONTEXT

This week will look at the entirety of chapter 1 of 2 Peter. This chapter can be divided into three sections: God's invitation (1-11), an outline of the letter's purpose (12-15), and a clear response to the first of three false teachings being perpetuated in the church (16-20). There is a divider between each of these sections in the scripture reading below to help you organize your thoughts as you read.

In the first section (verses 1-11), Peter outlines how **God is the One who provides everything we need to live the life He calls us to.** This section highlights how Christians are not expected to lead lives devoted to Jesus by simply willing themselves into obedience. Instead, Peter points out that it is God himself who grants us the ability to "practice" faith, virtue (or goodness), knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly (or familial) affection, and love. As humans grow in spiritual maturity, these Christian virtues grow within the believer. God gives the power to grow in faith, self-control, love, etc, but we also have a responsibility to "make every effort" to spiritually mature.

The next section (verses 12-15) lays out **Peter's goal of writing.** Peter believes that the time of his death is near. This section should not be cast aside as nothing more than a morbid reference to Peter's coming death. Peter takes this section of the letter to highlight the importance of remembrance. **Have you ever had a moment of forgetfulness where even the most basic fact had slipped your mind?** The Israelites of the Old Testament had this issue a lot. They were instructed time and time again to "bring to mind" the things that God had done for them and yet, over and over again, the goodness of God or his commandments to them were forgotten. This directive should not stay isolated in the pages of the Old Testament, either. Peter indicates here that, with what little time he has left, he intends to help his readers remember what Jesus has done for them and his coming again (the topic of the last section of this chapter).

The final section is a clear **rebuttal of the idea from false teachers that Jesus is not coming back to rule as King someday.** Peter references the transfiguration (see footnotes accompanying scripture) as clear proof that Jesus was revealed as King. In addition, Peter points out that the prophets of the Old Testament also clearly speak of Jesus--both His coming to Earth (which has already occurred, just as the prophets said it would) and His return to earth to judge and reign over His creation.

2 Peter 1:1-20

The original Greek word ("eusebeia") literally means "good worship." Taking other Biblical uses of the word into account, this idea of "good worship" indicates the behavior that comes from following Jesus. In this verse, Peter is simply reminding his readers and us that God has given us everything we need to live lives that are pleasing to Him.

1 Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,
To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:
2 May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.
3 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, 4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. 5 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, 7 and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. 8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. 10 Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. 11 For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Peter is almost assuredly referring to Jesus' statement that Peter would die a violent death (John 21:18-19). It is likely that Peter understood that the mounting pressure against Christians from Emperor Nero in Rome meant that his death was not too far away.

This is a reference to The Transfiguration, an event in Matthew 17, Mark 9, and Luke 9. Here, Jesus took three of his disciples (including Peter) up a mountain where God audibly spoke from Heaven and confirmed that Jesus was His son, the King they had been waiting for.

12 Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. 13 I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, 14 since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. 15 And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.

16 For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," 18 we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. 19 And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, 20 knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. 21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Observation & Interpretation



- After reading this passage, what words, phrases, or themes stick out to you?
- Re-read verses 3-4. What does it mean to be “partakers in his divine nature?”
- What does “spiritual maturity” mean to you? Can you think of someone in your life who embodies this? Can you see the virtues that Peter lists out in verses 5-7 in that person’s life?
- In verse 16-18, Peter describes his experience of witnessing the transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain. What specific details does he mention about this event, and how does it demonstrate the power and authority of Jesus?
- Verse 20 states that “no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation.” What does this mean and how does this emphasize the trustworthiness of Scripture?

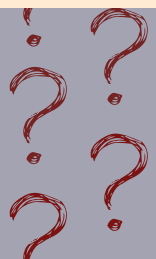
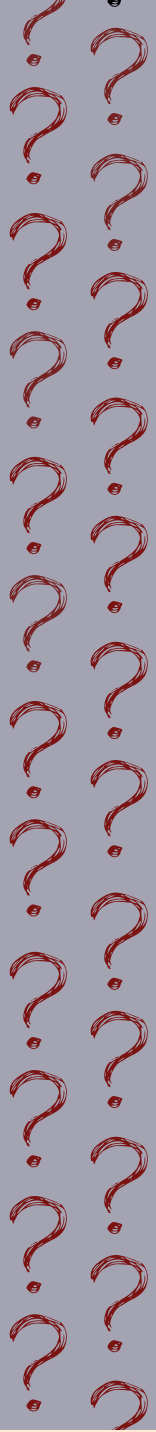
Application



- Verses 3-4 highlight the divine power that the Lord has granted us for living a godly life. How do we grow in godliness while also relying on God’s powerful provision?
- What are practices that “bring to mind” the faithfulness of God and the Truth of the Gospel?

Living Rooted

Verses 16-21 emphasize the reliability and importance of Scripture as a source of Truth. How can you give the Bible a larger role in your life? Are there practices or disciplines that can help us engage with Scripture more effectively? If you do not currently have a Bible reading plan to go through, consider reading one chapter of the book of John each time you sit down to study the Bible.



SEVEN

Leaders' Corruption

2 PETER 2:1-22

CONTEXT

What are some ways that you have been held accountable in your day-to-day life, whether that be in high school, here at Yale, on a sports team, in your job, or in your family? Which systems work? Which ones are easily ignored?

This second chapter builds on the first in that Peter continues to systematically address the false teachings rising up in the church. Verses 1-3 explain that some leaders in the church were **wrongly teaching that there will not be a "final reckoning"** or point at which the Lord will hold everyone accountable. Peter knows the motive for spreading this wrong belief: if there is no judgment, the false teachers can ignore Jesus' teachings about money and sex--areas that the false teachers were knowingly and openly disobeying Jesus. Peter makes it clear that they "exploit..with false words" (verse 3). And so, he spends the rest of the chapter breaking down this faulty teaching.

Peter does this by referencing **3 Old Testament stories** throughout verses 4-11 (see page following questions). All together, these stories demonstrate that God DOES respond to rebellion. Because God is just, he cannot ignore sin; it must be dealt with. So, in every story Peter mentions, those who wilfully engaged in sin (that which separates us from God) were met with God's judgment. But it is important to note that both in the story of Noah and of Sodom and Gamorrah, God faithfully delivers those who follow him.

Finally, in verses 12-22, Peter returns to his rebuke of these false teachers by pointing out that they "revel in their deceptions" and that they are actually "slaves of corruption". Not only do they openly disobey God, claiming that they are free to do what they please, but they are really just demonstrating how captive they are to their own sin. In letting greed and lust run rampant in their lives, they have become trapped in these ways of living. In God's justice, **these false leaders will be held accountable**, for they have turned away from the truth they already knew and have run back to a life controlled by sin.

2 Peter 2:1-22

1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. 2 And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. 3 And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; 5 if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; 6 if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; 7 and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked 8 (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); 9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, 10 and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority.

This is another Old Testament reference (found in Numbers 22:21-39). Balaam was a wicked prophet living in the time leading up to and after Israel entered the Promised Land. Desiring financial reward from the King of Moab, Balaam offered advice on how to lure the Israelites away from God and lessen their negative impact on Moab's territory. Peter is pointing out that the false teachers of that day are also greedy leaders whose poor example is harming others.

Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones, ¹¹ whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord. ¹² But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction, ¹³ suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing. They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you. ¹⁴ They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children! ¹⁵ Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing, ¹⁶ but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness.

¹⁷ These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved. ¹⁸ For, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error. ¹⁹ They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.

Peter is pointing out that these men are worse off because they have rejected the forgiveness of their sins that they had earlier accepted. They have brought upon themselves greater culpability by openly disregarding the Truth that they once knew.

20 For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. 21 For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. 22 What the true proverb says has happened to them: "The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire."

Observation & Interpretation

- After reading this passage, what words, phrases, or themes stick out to you?
- This chapter has quite a few Old Testament references. Why might Peter have wanted to include these stories and the proverb at the end?
- Verse 17 says that the false teachers are “waterless springs and mists driven by a storm.” What might this mean in the context of this chapter?
- Read 1 Corinthians 10:13 and discuss:
 - According to this verse, does God stop temptations from happening?
 - What is the difference between being tempted and being entangled or trapped by sin (as discussed in verses 19-20 in 2 Peter)?

Application

- In what ways are you tempted to “return to the mire” (verse 22)? In what areas is the draw to do whatever you desire strongest?
- In what ways can we actively guard ourselves against the deceptive teachings and/or immoral behaviors described in this chapter? How can we help others to avoid these pitfalls in their effort to follow Jesus?

Living Rooted

Peter is writing to various churches, or groups of believers who live in proximity to one another. The gathering of believers is significant to walking with Jesus, as we learn and challenge one another. Choose a time this week to be a part of a corporate gathering focused on worship and teaching, something like Chi Alpha Live or a Sunday morning church service.

Commit to taking notes on the sermon or teaching. Intentionally bring a notebook, your Bible, and a writing utensil to the gathering. In the days after, revisit your notes. You can re-read verses mentioned, look into a source the speaker used, and spend time praying about what the Lord wants you to do with what you learned. This practice allows you to check the validity of the speaker’s claims and teachings and, if they are sound, make those teachings stick in your mind so that you may be transformed.

Old Testament References (2 Peter 2:4-11)

Rebellious Angels (Genesis 6:1-4)

This story has been pondered over for hundreds of years. There were angels in heaven who, in rebellion and lust, abandoned their heavenly stations. Peter uses this story in 2 Peter to point out that even the angels are not exempt from God's justice, so how much more will God be sure to address the wrongs done by these false teachers.

The Flood & Noah's Ark (Genesis 6-8)

This better-known story from the beginning of Genesis once again illustrates God's justice at work. As the population of the earth expanded, so did their wickedness. Only one man, Noah, and his family stayed faithful to God and were saved from a flood that covered the whole earth. God had instructed Noah to build this ark 130 years before the flood! In writing about Noah, Peter makes sure to highlight the fact that God has always and will always protect those who remain faithful to Him.

Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19)

Sodom and Gomorrah were two cities that existed post-flood where lascivious behavior ran rampant. There was one man, named Lot, in the city who still followed God and he was given warning about the impending destruction of these two cities. He and his family escaped before God's judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah came about. Peter also uses this story to demonstrate how God protects those "cultural exiles" who choose to follow Him.

EIGHT

Leaders' Distorted Theology

2 PETER 3:1-18

CONTEXT

Work together to quickly summarize what 2 Peter has covered so far. Who is he writing to? Why? What have been some applications for you and your Core Group?

This final week of 2 Peter and of this study into the letters of Peter presents one final rebuke of the false teachers of the day, followed by a beautiful picture of the hope that followers of Jesus have.

Verses 1-9 focus on a faulty line of reasoning. These false teachers say “generations of God’s people have come and gone without seeing the fulfillment of their hopes. Where is this ‘true hope’ that Jesus promised us?” Peter starts his counterargument by reminding his readers that God has always intervened at the right time. He uses the story of creation to highlight how God can intervene whenever he decides the time is right. God created the universe from nothing, and so, he can be trusted to intervene in the sorrows and suffering of our world and set all things right. Jesus has promised that he will return (see John 14:1-3) and He has proven himself trustworthy to fulfill that promise; we just have yet to see it come to pass.

But then Peter brings up what he believes is the underlying question: “if we are to believe that Jesus really is coming back, why is it taking so long?” Peter addresses these concerns by pointing out how small their scope of understanding is. Our conception of time is so limited; we cannot see the whole of human history like God can. He argues that we should instead see this “delay” as a demonstration of God’s patience, as he desires a relationship with all of His creation. But, the “day of the Lord” (the day of Jesus’ return to earth) IS coming.

Peter now uses verses 10-13 to discuss the prophecies pointing to this “day of the Lord”. He uses imagery from Isaiah 34 and Zephaniah 3 (both found in the Old Testament) to call to mind the long awaited day when justice will be done and a new world, ruled by Jesus, will be established.

The conclusion to the letter comes in verses 14-18. Here, Peter makes a final appeal to his readers (and us) to live lives of faithful service to Jesus and he caps off the letter with one final statement of worship, saying: “To him [Jesus] be the glory both now and to the day of eternity.” Peter knows that, as we gaze upon the face of Jesus, the suffering of the world, spoken about so boldly in 1 and 2 Peter will fade into distant memory.

2 Peter 3:1-18

1 This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, 2 that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, 3 knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. 4 They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation." 5 For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, 6 and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. 7 But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

8 But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

Verse 5 here references to the creation of the world (Genesis 1-2) and verse 6 references the Great Flood of Noah's day (Genesis 6-9, also discussed in week 6 of this study).

This word comes from the Greek word "metanoia" which means literally "change of mind". It is used throughout the Bible to mean a complete turning away from sin. This is what the Lord desires for His Creation.

Note that Peter's directive here is consistent with the picture of Christian brotherhood (or family) painted throughout 1 Peter.

This little aside is a defense of Paul's teachings, which were apparently being misconstrued at the time. Peter is affirming Paul as a leader and giving one final warning to his readers to carefully weigh teachings that they hear.

11 Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, 12 waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! 13 But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

14 Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. 15 And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, 16 as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. 17 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. 18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

Observation & Interpretation

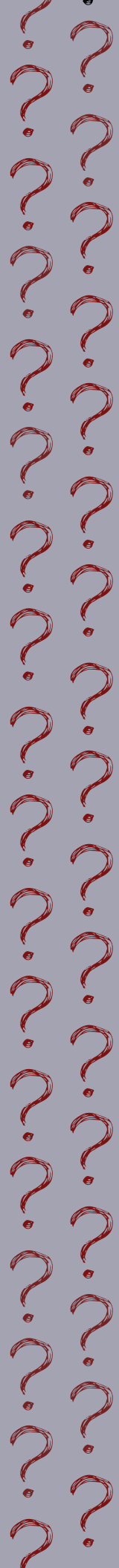


- After reading this passage, what words, phrases, or themes stick out to you?
- Verse 4 includes some impatient comments from people of the day regarding Jesus' coming. What is something that you have waited a long time for (or maybe are still waiting on)? Can you relate to the overwhelming impatience that these Early Christians felt?
- In verse 8, Peter discusses the concept of God's perfect timing, stating that to the Lord, "one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like one day." How does this depiction of time relate to the delay in Jesus' return, and what implications does it have for the readers' perseverance?
- This chapter makes a couple of references to God's patience (refer to verses 9 and 15). How is the patience of God significant to those who follow Jesus?
- Peter skillfully addresses the false teaching regarding the truth and timing of Jesus' return. How does he do this and what can we learn from his response in dealing with doubts and criticisms about our own faith?

Application



- Peter's final instruction to his readers is to "grow in grace and knowledge". What are some practices that grow your grace for others? What about knowledge?
- The world is very broken and seemingly hopeless. What hope does 2 Peter offer to us? What does it look like to respond to brokenness with hope?



Living Rooted

This week, take some time to reflect on what you have learned in studying 1 and 2 Peter. Look back over any notes you have or the pages of this study to refresh your mind on what God highlighted to you. Choose just 1 or 2 of the Living Rooted practices (or something else that you felt challenged to do) and commit to doing those on a regular basis over the break. A short synopsis of each of the seven Living Rooted practices is below.

Week 1: Practically come alongside those who are struggling here at Yale as an encourager

Week 2: Do one “family activity” with your Core Group (or other community) on break

Week 3: Pray for those in authority over you

Week 4: Pray for those in your Core Group (in person, if you are able)

Week 5: Cultivate a chosen habit of surrendering anxieties to God

Week 6: Take time to study the Bible in-depth

Week 7: Take and then return to sermon notes to test, study, and pray over a teaching or sermon